

# Office of Transition Initiatives

## COMMUNITY COHESION INITIATIVE

### QUARTERLY REPORT, OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2014



**OTI Mission Statement**  
*To support U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crisis. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilization needs.*

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Through the Afghanistan Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI), USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) seeks to increase resilience in areas vulnerable to insurgent exploitation by (1) strengthening community capacities to promote a peaceful transition; (2) supporting peaceful electoral processes and outcomes; and (3) countering violent threats to a peaceful transition.

CCI is implemented by Creative Associates International, Inc. (Creative) in the east, south and southwest. This quarterly report covers the period of project performance for CCI's activities from October 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

#### PROGRAM AREAS

During this quarter, Creative-CCI concluded programming within Kandahar and Hilmand provinces in the South, and Ghazni, Khost and Kunar provinces in the East.

At the heart of Creative-CCI's approach is the focus on community and citizen engagement, strengthening ties between and among local actors, customary governance structures, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). Grounded in the principle that durable resilience and cohesion is a result of local will, initiative, and leadership, Creative-CCI designs and implements small grants through a process-oriented, community driven approach. This approach seeks to strengthen linkages between communities vulnerable to insurgent exploitation and positive influencers - both GIROA and other actors. At a regional level, Creative-CCI utilizes both "soft" (Community Cohesion Jirgas, outreach visits by district government) and "hard" (small-scale infrastructure) activities, to strengthen community resiliencies and linkages between vulnerable communities and customary leadership – increasing community cohesion in the process. At the national level, the Program Development Unit (PDU) supports innovative and proof-of-concept initiatives, together with robust analytics to inform Creative-CCI programming.

To direct and improve programming, Creative-CCI relies on a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, in addition to a rolling assessment and workplan process. Creative-CCI's M&E system gathers information from multiple levels to include atmospherics and data from third parties (spanning activity outputs to overall stability of an area), to assessing programming success and providing information necessary to improve activities and inform district appraisals. Creative-CCI also conducts ongoing assessments that provide situational awareness and a strategic analysis of Creative-CCI's areas of operations, in order to inform the development of provincial work plans that guide programming.

## COUNTRY SITUATION

### Security Transition

This quarter witnessed a continued increase in insurgent incidents across CCI's target provinces. The operating environment became steadily less permissive to Creative-CCI activities. As the project moved to close its remaining activities this quarter, various activities had to be compressed in light of security concerns and some were outright cancelled as certain districts became demonstrably less permissive. Ongoing cross-border issues in Kunar Province impacted all of the CCI's program districts there and border districts in Khost and Hilmand saw constant insurgent movements. Project teams in border districts in Khost and Hilmand observed evidence of a significant increase in movement and activity of insurgent groups, much of which may not have been identified or reported via ANSF. Project stakeholders in a number of southern districts expressed both pessimism and in some cases despair in voicing their impressions that their districts have returned to insurgent control. Nevertheless, Creative-CCI field staff in provincial and district offices report tentative optimism within communities that the new National Unity Government represents a positive shift for the future of the country.

The surge in Anti-Government Elements (AGE) activity correlates with the downsizing of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), conclusion of US combat operations, and formal handover on December 31, 2014 to ANSF. As a result - compared with the previous quarter - the number of recorded incidents (of all types) increased this quarter by 90 and a higher level of insurgent activity was recorded in all but two of the Creative-CCI provinces (Kabul and Ghazni). An increase in serious attacks in Kabul, specifically targeting expatriates (including a USAID implementing partner), resulted in several foreign fatalities in November. Foreign guesthouses, vehicle convoys, and expatriates remain under constant threat.

Movement of CCI's staff throughout targeted provinces and districts was reduced dramatically as planned and in line with the closure of the CCI field offices. The timing was fortuitous as the ability of staff to travel into certain districts would have been hindered due to ongoing ANSF clearance operations. Creative-CCI has prepared for its departure at the close of the task order, addressing severance and contract termination tasks with staff and contractors - including the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), as well as initiating plans to draw down its expatriate security staff. Expatriate staff movement remains limited and unchanged from previous quarters and current security restrictions are not expected to change in the final months of the program.

All Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) were completed and logged with USAID/OTI and Creative HQ. The table below details violent incidents recorded during this reporting period in provinces of Creative-CCI implementation and is not project related. Data is sourced from National Police Control Centre daily reports. 'Standoff' refers to no actual gunfire exchange but has potential to escalate, while an example of 'Others' is an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) air strike.

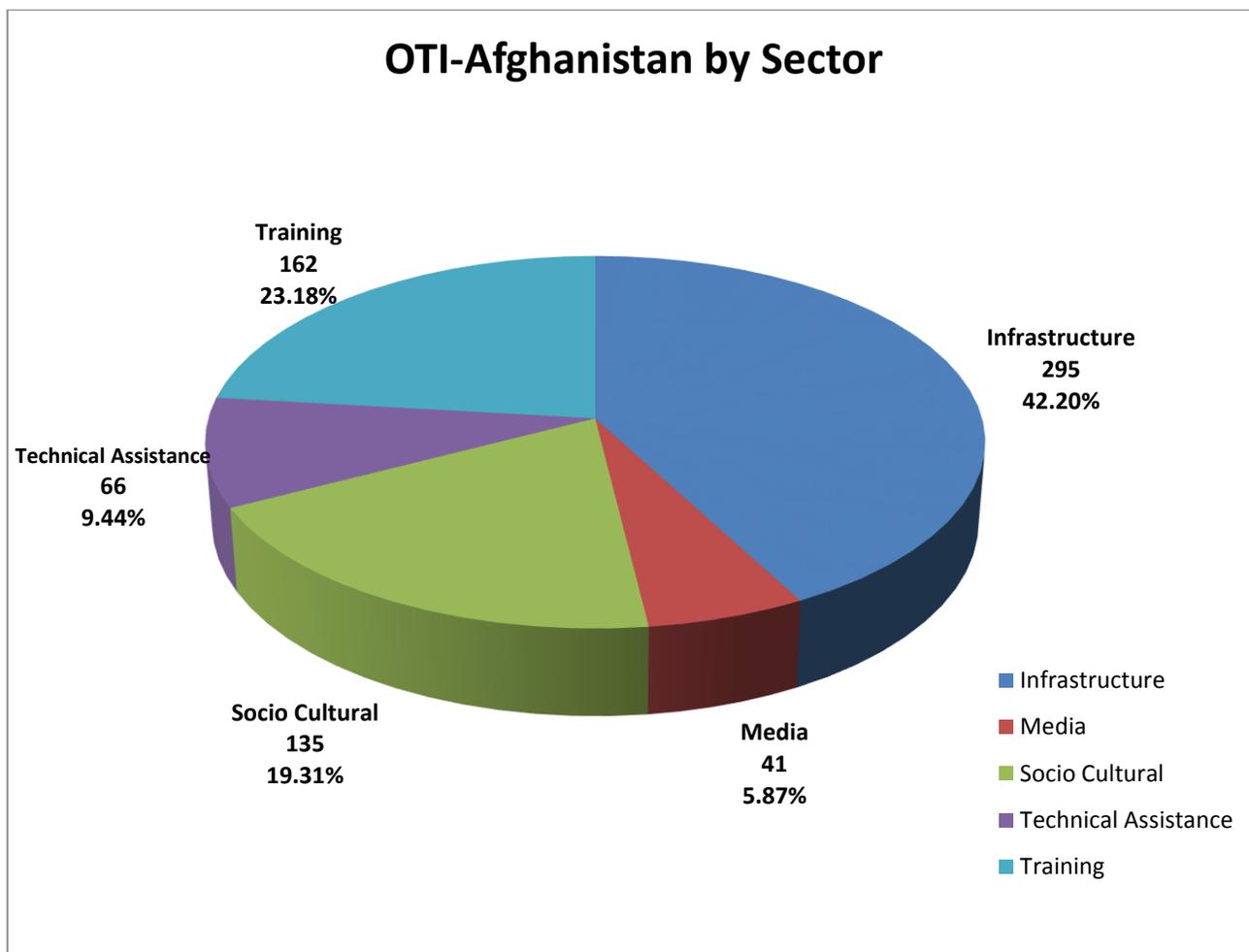
Province	Armed Clash	IED*	BBIED/VBIED#	Stand off	Others	Grand Total
Kabul	7	38	17	11	28	101
Kandahar	61	61	6	3	94	225
Kunar	48	29	0	136	43	256
Ghazni	75	28	0	37	34	174
Hilmand	180	71	6	38	33	328
Khost	7	37	3	12	38	97
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>1181</b>

\*Improvised Explosive Device (IED)

# Bicycle/Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device BBIED/VBIED

## Political Transition

Since assuming office on September 29, 2014, President Ashraf Ghani and the unity government faced continued challenges. The President and his Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah reportedly argued over the appointment of key ministerial posts, particularly in the more powerful Ministries of Defense and the Interior. As a result, the government had yet to appoint a cabinet as of December 31, 2014. As the security situation in Kabul deteriorated, many citizens expressed frustration over the inability to reach a compromise. In spite of the delays in announcing the cabinet, CCI's field staff report optimism in the provinces which President Ghani will lead his new cabinet in engaging, pursuing, and funding development strategies to continue the work started by CCI.



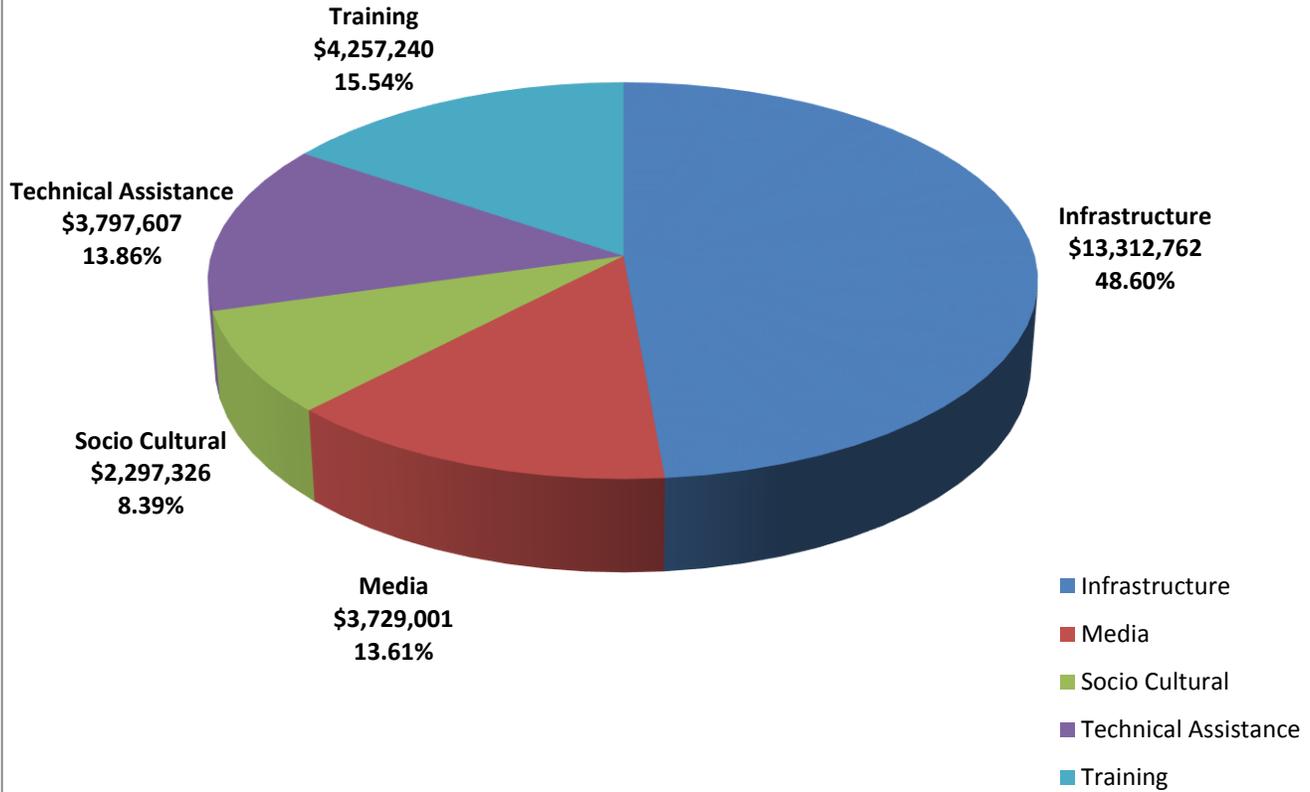
## GRANTS SUMMARY

Since March 2012, OTI, through its implementing partner, Creative-CCI, has cleared 699 small grants. The breakdown by sector is as follows: Infrastructure 295 grants (42.20%), Media 41 grants (5.87%), Socio Cultural 135 grants (19.31%), Technical Assistance 66 grants (9.44%) and Training 162 grants (23.18%).

Between October and December 2014, CCI:

Infrastructure: 0 grants  
Media: 0 grants  
Socio-Cultural: 0 grants  
Technical Assistance: 0 grants  
Training: 0 grants

## OTI-Afghanistan-Activities by Value



### GRANTS SUMMARY

Since March 2012, OTI, through its implementing partner, Creative-CCI has cleared 699 small grants; totaling \$27,393,936. The breakdown by value is as follows: Infrastructure \$13,312,762 (48.60%), Media \$3,729,001 (13.61%), Socio Cultural \$2,297,326 (8.39%), Technical Assistance \$3,797,607 (13.86%) and Training \$4,257,240 (15.54%).

Between October and December 2014, CCI:

Cleared:	0 Grants
Disbursed (quarterly):	\$6,863,931.57
Disbursed (life of program):	\$25,716,137.45
Completed:	85 Activities
Closed:	145 Activities

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

During this quarter, Creative-CCI concluded the majority of its activities implemented from the provincial and district offices, closing 145 activities and delivering final disbursements. In line with the OTI-approved closeout plan, Creative-CCI exited the provinces and closed its offices in Hilmand, Khost, Ghazni, and Kunar in November and in Kandahar in December. Staff in the provincial and district offices focused on grant closeout and operations activities prior to the office closure, and some provincial procurement and operations staff, as well as provincial managers, relocated temporarily to Kabul to assist in file reviews.

As Creative-CCI proceeded through the closedown phase, the project continued to surpass its disbursement targets, exceeding Q1 targets by nearly 62%. CCI achieved a disbursement rate of \$2,415,879.43 in October. This was followed by sustained disbursement rates of more than \$4.4 million in November and December (combined), exceeding targets for both months. The result was a total disbursement of \$6,863,931.57 in FY15 Q1, representing an overall increase of approximately 8% from the previous quarter.

### ***South***

During this quarter, Creative-CCI staff in the South focused on grant closeout and operations in anticipation of the closing of the district and provincial offices. The majority of program activities in the Hilmand and Kandahar provinces were completed by November 15 (one activity in Hilmand was completed December 1). The Hilmand office closed on November 30, and the Kandahar Office closed on December 23.

Creative-CCI staff continued to engage with community stakeholders on final operations and messaging throughout the closeout period. Generally, CCI Hilmand staff report that relationships with all grantees remain positive. On November 1, Musa Qala District Center Staff, ANP, ALP Commanders, and the DCC held a meeting regarding security upgrades of Musa Qala district. One of the District Governor's (DG) primary concerns was that CCI implementation in Musa Qala was concluding. He spoke of the benefits from CCI programming for the community and reminded everyone CCI was the only project that brought the community together for a common goal through activities such as: rehabilitated culverts, water gates, schools, retaining walls, markets, vocational training programs, resulting in an improved quality of life in Musa Qala. All attendees echoed the appreciation. Of the 16 members of the Provincial Council, the majority are youth who have shown potential to be key future players in stabilization and development of the province.

CCI Kandahar has also developed and maintained viable relationships with provincial and district governance entities and community elders, including the DDA. While certain government officials have occasionally voiced aggressive and negative opinions about the program, target communities distanced themselves from such negative perceptions and remain positive about CCI impact. During this quarter, Kandahar staff engaged communities through the support of positive DDA and village elders to discuss concerns and grievances with district officials and request funding for community priorities, with the aim that district officials can pass these messages through the PG to higher levels. CCI encouraged communities to collaborate when considering future development plans.

The security situation in Kandahar and Hilmand has continued to deteriorate in this quarter. Kandahar has seen an increase of targeted assassinations in Kandahar City, and increased anti-government elements (AGE) presence in Maiwand that has the potential to spill over into Zhari and Panjwayi. Local citizens working with international NGOs are especially concerned. Hilmand's Lashkar Gah City also witnessed protests from concerned residents, distressed over the deaths of civilians as collateral damage during police encounters with the AGes. Residents continue to call upon President Ghani to send more and better trained security forces to Hilmand.

### ***East***

This quarter, Creative-CCI East staff prepared for the closing of the offices in Kunar, Khost, and Ghazni by closing grant activities and conducting operational arrangements. The offices were closed by November 30, 2014.

As closeout commenced, Creative-CCI took steps to conclude engagement with community stakeholders on final activities and messaging. In Kunar, CCI staff noted positive outcomes of the programs efforts and informally indicate closer links between the communities in Kunar and their governments. Staff report that more people are visiting district centers to bring ideas and projects to their governments to encourage the development of their district and province, rather than engaging CCI to initiate new activities. In the final ceremony in CCI's target districts this quarter, the DGs promised their communities that the new government represents an improvement and will be able to implement more development programs. The DGs were optimistic that the Afghanistan National Unity Government (NUG) will work with international community to support this development and to prioritize local involvement in funding decisions for development projects.

During a press conference broadcast on local television, the Khost PG highlighted the role of CCI in stabilization and development in the region. He noted that CCI helped to develop stronger links between the government and communities in Khost and that access to government officials expanded. The PG later informed district governors of the closure of CCI and advised them to not break the links created by the program. Communities should still be able to interact with and submit requests or concerns to the local governments, even without the project. Finally, the PG informed CCI that he issued instructions to all DGs to develop a work plan to organize community requests and grievances that could eventually be shared with government ministries or potential donors.

In Ghazni, Creative-CCI staff maintained strong and positive working relationships with district stakeholders throughout the project, regularly engaging partners, ministries, DGs, and community representatives on workplans, activity idea generation, and activity implementation. Influential elders participated heavily in the project shuras and worked closely with the district governments on activities. Upon learning that the program would be closing, these elders approached CCI to ask about possibilities for extension. CCI staff report that overall conditions in the target districts have seen change during the course of the program, as more people came to the district governments with requests and grievances. While security concerns in Ghazni remain, overall CCI's staff have observed evidence of stronger links between the community and government.

### ***Program Development Unit (PDU)***

As the project proceeded into the closedown period, PDU completed implementation of all but two activities, closed its completed activities, and prepared for grant file reviews of closed activities.

This quarter saw the culmination of the *Innocent Heart* drama series (detailed below in *Activity Highlights and Achievements*). While the use of drama programming as a tool for positive social transformation is not new, it remains an underutilized medium in transitioning contexts. Imbedded within the series are strong female characters, themes of electoral peace, and education to spotlight the achievements made by Afghanistan in the past two decades. The two expatriate STTA providing support to this activity received positive feedback from Moby Media about the quality of the content in the program and CCI received anecdotal feedback from its staff about the popularity of the show in their home villages.

Following the completion of the election audit activities in the previous quarter, PDU worked with Creative-CCI HQ to coordinate payments for the 39 observers and other vendors and prepare to close out the activities. With support from its electoral conflict prevention advisors (NAT0045), PDU finalized a draft of the Peaceful Election Advocacy Campaign Assessment to evaluate the efficacy of these messaging campaigns undertaken in the previous quarters. The draft report concludes that CCI's activities had a positive influence on Afghans to participate and engage in peaceful behavior during the elections and noted that the program identified valuable data to help mitigate and prevent electoral violence. The report includes recommendations for future election messaging activities and was shared with OTI for review and feedback.

PDU completed its final phase of post-election messaging following the announcement of the presidential election results in late September and the provincial council election results in mid-October. Over the course of October, 2,280 radio spots comprising 6 messages were broadcast on Killid Radio along with 88 TV spots covering 4 messages on Tolo TV. The focus of the messaging was to highlight the importance of social and economic development of Afghanistan which can only be achieved through unity. Throughout the course of PDU election messaging, over 25,000 radio spots were broadcast across eleven radio stations and over 1,000 TV spots were broadcast across five television stations. This messaging effort covered the entire process from the pre-election phase through to post-announcement, with distinct community-driven messaging designed for each round of the election, the audit process, post-election phases, and the final result announcement. The intermediate objective for these activities was to support community-driven efforts to prevent or mitigate electoral conflict or violence. Evidence from successive assessments, including the internal monitoring unit, grantees, and internal M&E staff, indicated that not only were the PSAs seen by the target audiences, but also the broad suite of elections messages were successful in encouraging people to vote in a peaceful manner. Moreover, communities asserted that these messages had positive role in reducing election related violence.

As part of the PDU strategy, the two cornerstone themes of programming, traditional dispute resolution and Kabul urban transition, completed their implementation during the reporting quarter. Comprising seven activities, the traditional dispute resolution covered 23 districts across 6 provinces. Focused on creating dynamic opportunities for learning and exchange across and between different stakeholder groups, these activities sought to address the longstanding capacity challenges that community-based informal dispute resolution bodies face as well as their estrangement from state justice institutions. Activities used a portfolio of real cases – active, closed, civil, and criminal – reflecting the scope of actual disputes in the districts and provinces ensuring learning was driven by

context; a total of 4,767 tribal leaders, community elders, youth, religious scholars and government judicial actors participated in the program activities. The culmination of the learning efforts was the holding of 66 Jirga that led to the resolution of 29 cases across the implementation areas. According to CCI monitoring and participant and grantee feedback, the key success of this portfolio activity was providing the opportunity for the stakeholders to learn how to systematically go through the process of resolving cases, starting from how to review a case, set a plan for the collection of information, how to consider the factors in a case, how to consult different legal frameworks, how to structure a resolution, and how to register resolutions with the Department of Huqooq/Rights. The linkages developed are readily apparent, with all key actors in the formal and informal sector actively participating across activities. There continues to be a clear desire on the part of the all Jirga members for more knowledge and opportunities for exchange and the resource efficient methodology developed by PDU demonstrates that there are readily accessible programming avenues that can deliver quick results in communities.

Working with two organizations across 6 activities, the Kabul urban transition portfolio supported initiatives that enabled marginalized youth to develop positive identities within their communities by identifying and implementing community projects. The activities were set in the Dasht-e Barchi slum in western Kabul City and the districts of Deh Sabz, Bagrami, and Qarabagh - 4 locations struggling with the negative effects of urbanization and high-risk areas for extremism and organized crime. The activities saw the establishment of 7 youth collectives comprising 881 youth (601 males and 280 females) that, in turn, identified and implemented 14 separate small scale community projects, ranging from anti-drug campaigns, agricultural disease prevention demonstrations, inter-school quizzes, and the establishment of a computer-training labs and community libraries. The community projects were implemented during the reporting quarter and not only responded to community needs but also provided an opportunity for the youth to demonstrate the positive role the association can provide to communities. Alongside the community projects, the youth associations conducted in excess of 20 meetings with local government actors to present and advocate for identified community needs. For example, the newly established youth collective in Qarabagh identified two key community concerns and sent a delegation to Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to advocate for action. The delegation successfully advocated for the two priorities – a pedestrian bridge and road asphaltting – both received provisional MRRD approval and budget allocation. The approach piloted by PDU – getting youth to play a more active role in finding solutions for problems in their community –demonstrated success and the results from the completion of the activities during the reporting quarter indicate that this model of rapid programming does enable youth people to develop positive identities within their community.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)***

This quarter, M&E submitted a total of 191 final evaluation reports (FERs) to OTI for approval, of which 109 have been approved. In October, M&E staff continued to frequent sites across the project to monitor grant progress and processes. The weekly activity notes, major findings, lessons learned, and outputs generated through CCI funded grants are reported and incorporated into the OTI database on a weekly basis. Provincial and district M&E teams conducted an average of one site visit per week, per activity, during October. As project closedown progressed, the M&E team shifted focus in November and December from monitoring activities to the evaluation process and drafting of FERs. M&E further provided support to the other departments by providing specialized data requests, advice, and feedback as required. At the end of the quarter, M&E processed 45 FERs (of which 39 pertain to the election observation activities, which will be presented as one FER), and 14 FERs were pending internal review.

### ***Operations***

CCI-Creative continued closedown preparations started during the last reporting period. As noted above, two district and five provincial offices closed during this quarter in a staggered approach to support CCI's implementation targets and to ensure continued community support throughout the closedown period. District offices in Muqur and Nahri Sarraj closed on October 9, with staff relocating to their respective provincial offices to support final closeout procedures until November 30. Provincial offices in Ghazni, Khost, Kunar, and Hilmand closed on schedule by November 30, with the retrenchment of 130 staff and disposition of all inventory to the approved beneficiaries. The Kandahar provincial office closed on December 31. Prior to the closure of district and regional offices, CCI offered all staff members the opportunity participate in capacity building training focused on CV and cover letter writing, job searching skills, and interviewing techniques. 80 CCI staff traveled to Kabul to participate in the sessions.

CCI brought several staff members from the provincial procurement teams, as well as some operational staff and all Provincial Managers, to Kabul to assist in activity file reviews to ensure completeness, capture program successes, and prepare these documents for external review. Most of these team members will remain on staff through the middle of February to guarantee a compliant and timely closedown. CCI is on target to review 699

activity files from the East and South Regions as well as the Program Development Unit, and 1,206 procurement files above the \$3,000 micro-procurement threshold, prior to the end of the task order on February 28. This timeline ensures that final documentation is collected, inventoried, and shipped before security structures are dismantled and final staff depart post at the end of the program.

**Procurement Department (PD)**

This quarter, the CCI procurement department executed a total of 80 sub-contracts and sub-contract modifications, worth approximately \$337,298 USD. Additionally, procurement staff were engaged in processing vendor payments and monitoring the final deliveries of all goods and services to project sites to ensure that program activities could be closed out. As noted above, several provincial procurement staff relocated to the Kabul office during the months of October, November and December 2014 following the closure of offices in Ghazni, Kunar, Khost, Hilmand, and Kandahar.

With the closedown of the CCI project officially underway, all procurement staff were fully involved in the assessment and cleanup of all procurement files. As of December 31, 2014, the CCI procurement department has reviewed 536 files, out of a total of 1206 files. Of these, 186 have been closed.

An overview of procurement successes from October 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 are further detailed in the table below:

Region	# POs , POAs, PO/POA modifications executed	Value (USD) Exchange rate 1 USD = 58 AFN	# VSU requests submitted	# VSU approvals received	Value of VSU requests submitted (USD)	# CO requests submitted and approved	Value of CO requests (USD)
South	8	\$42,741.38	1	1	\$12,695.69	0	
East	10	\$39,344.47	0	0	0	0	
National Level (PDU)	6	\$161,970.83	1	0	\$31,151.98	1	\$391,597.03
Ops	56	\$93,242.17	4	2	\$173,881.81		
<b>TOTALS</b>	80	\$337,298.85	6	3	\$217,729.48		
<b># staff trained</b>	20						

## ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### ***Innocent Heart* encourages community-led efforts to resist insurgent activity and promote peace and stability**

With one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, radio and television are Afghanistan's most vital means to communicate to the broader population. CCI's production of *Innocent Heart*, a six-party weekly Pashto drama serial, is connecting with Pashtun audiences across the country to address pressing issues affecting communities vulnerable to insurgent exploitation. Written and produced in-house by Creative-CCI, with on-location recording and post-production completed in partnership with Moby Media, the concept was also adapted for radio to broadcast nationally in a 10-part series.

*Innocent Heart* centers on Kabir, a 12-year-old boy naively manipulated by insurgents into planting an IED that kills three people, including his best friend and his brother-in-law. While the attack itself is visually and emotionally confronting, episodes leading to the tragic event portray a cast of fundamentally good, although sometimes deeply flawed individuals, striving for a better life. Drawn from different ages, genders, educational backgrounds, and societal roles, they are all individually and devastatingly affected by the explosion, only heightening the senselessness of Kabir's actions and the unforeseen sequential chain of events that follows.

The story is set in the lead up to fictitious Presidential and Provincial Council Elections, storylines focus on the importance of a peaceful electoral process (parliamentary elections are in 2015), promoting the rights and roles of women within society, fostering positive self-images for young Afghans, and strengthening linkages between the community and GIRoA. The series discreetly references Creative-CCI project outcomes, like road rehabilitation, tailoring courses for women and basketball training camps for girls, and how these contribute to improved community resilience. Set within a compelling storyline developed by a team of experienced Afghan drama writers and producers, *Innocent Heart*'s veracious messaging offers pathways where viewers can recognize how communities come together to foster a better future for themselves and their families. *Innocent Heart* represents a better future for Afghanistan, with innovative scripts showing how community led advocacy for local and broader governance organizations, recognition that democratic rule of law and improved cohesive structures can effectively resist insurgent activity, promote peace and stability and lead to better opportunities.



CCI expanded the reach of the production by adapting the series for radio broadcast. CCI also aired a series of innovative radio roundtable discussions to further explore themes highlighted in the drama, such as the benefits of peace, the responsibility of parents and communities with regards to children, and the importance of countering and resisting insurgent influences. Representatives from the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Peace Council, writers and actors from the series, academics, educators, and leaders in the business community, all took part in the discussion series.

Moby Media's television and radio departments provided excellent feedback from broadcasters in Khost and Hilmand about the quality and content of *Innocent Heart*, and indicated the radio broadcasts were particularly well-received by the communities in those provinces. Further, one of CCI's own staff reported that, on a visit to his home in Jalalabad, his mother gathered the family to watch the program on Friday night, which she said was her new favorite drama. She said that everyone in the village watched the program and were excited to discuss the storylines. (NAT0040)

### **Strengthening Community Dispute Resolution Mechanisms**

Mullahs traditionally play a strong role in community dispute resolution across Afghanistan, and their decisions carry weight within their communities. While many individuals' qualifications are pre-requisites for their religious appointments as Imams, their formal training on social and legal issues is inconsistent across the country. Particularly of issue is Mullah's awareness of the limits of their authority as it relates to the formal justice system, as many have had no training at all. Further, traditional leaders often neglect human rights, and in particular, womens rights, in their decisionmaking processes, and enhancing their awareness of human rights and relevant laws is critical in enhancing their ability to make decisions in this capacity.

With a Fixed Obligation Grant to the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), Creative-CCI supported work with three existing provincial-level traditional leader networks to provide increased dispute resolution support to provincial and district GIRoA as well as community Shura's and Jirga. The activity aimed to create linkages across the formal and informal law structures through the inclusion of traditional leaders, community elders, district GIRoA and provincial GIRoA to enhance these structures ability to resolve disputes and encourage a peaceful transition.

NECDO utilized a Training of Trainers (TOT) model to educate Imams, community shura leaders, women activities, teachers, and local women shura leaders on peace, conflict resolution, dispute resolution, human rights, women's rights, and the role of religious leaders in supporting a peaceful transition in Afghanistan. After developing a training manual, NECDO conducted four rounds of TOT workshops in three target provinces (Kandahar, Kabul, and Kunar), training a total of 124 men and 138 women. NECDO further established three provincial Community Working Groups, comprised of the trainees, to engage in community advocacy and conflict management.

On October 21, NECDO organized a three-day dispute resolution and capacity building workshop with 46 representatives from Kandahar, Kabul and Kunar Case Working Groups (CWGs). The session sought to encourage experience sharing to develop best practices and lessons learned across the provinces, and to further



Case Working Groups at the start of the 3-day capacity building and networking workshop.

enhance skill sets in key areas relating to dispute resolution, human rights advocacy groups and individual negotiating tactics. Discussions focused on how best practices and lessons learned from the respective provinces can be integrated into future activities to promote the value of dispute resolution and encourage a peaceful transition. The workshop was an excellent opportunity to bring different groups together, including ulumas, women, youth and tribal elders, and represented the first occasion ulumas and imams from Kandahar had sat together with women in such a forum. Participants expressed that the project had helped strengthen their understanding of the value of community dispute resolution mechanisms, and that it had enhanced their knowledge of women's rights and human rights issues in Afghanistan. A mullah who came from Kandahar said, "The CWGs are a good idea and more effective because this is a volunteer approach to dispute resolution at the community level." (NAT0043)

## Dream and Achieve Inspires Young Entrepreneurs

*Dream and Achieve*, or *Anad Aw Hasa* in Pashto, is an 11-part television reality series designed to bring people together by identifying small civic-run projects run by local people within regular communities. The competition-based format evaluated these projects that have evolved to become valuable community assets and have the potential to grow or be emulated in other districts. The series identified a range of contestants who lead community initiatives, such as a person running a school supplies drive, supervising a sports team that unites and motivates youth, or someone who administers midwifery training. *Dream and Achieve* targeted Afghanistan's growing youth population, a community particularly susceptible to exploitation and influence from anti-government elements due to high unemployment and poor economic conditions.

Contestants worked to further refine and articulate their business models while being assessed and guided by judges. A panel of experts provides mentoring and business advice to contestants, while the series is also supported through employers, universities and the GIRoA representation. In November, Sayed Aziz-ul-Haq Ezafmand was announced the winner and provided a cash prize to further his project, which sought to create employment opportunities in Kunar province by utilizing the areas plentiful yet unused forest resources to manufacture wood paneling used in construction.



Anad Aw Hasa filming a solar power project in Kunar

The format aims to advance the legitimacy of government and the role it plays towards encouraging legitimate business ideas, while countering negative perceptions and promoting opportunities for employment and income generation. Dream and Achieve sets out to inform, educate, and inspire viewers to progress their own business concepts. The program further strives to affirmatively influence the value of building stability by highlighting positive interactions between provincial and district governments, as well as explaining government's role in assisting young entrepreneurs. Four radio interactive workshops were broadcast on the radio to align with the series, where contestants, judges, GIRoA officials and business leaders discussed topics from the television programs and provided advice to listeners who phoned in to ask related questions.



Event panelists from Parliament, universities and business owner groups answered many questions from the audience.

In addition to the television program, the activity included three events in Kandahar, Kabul, and Kunar to further disseminate advice and business lessons learned through the television series. The events featured a panel of guest speakers from government and business sectors that led discussions on topics relating to how to start and manage a business. Speakers took questions from an audience of community elders, business leaders, economics students and young entrepreneurs. (NAT0008)

### Retaining wall rehabilitation enhances agricultural production and irrigation in Tajekan

Residents of the approximately 50 villages located along the Deh Adam Khan Canal faced flooding and damage to farmlands during seasonal rains, while landlords and farmers farther from the canal regularly faced water shortages leading to conflict over access to the valuable resource. Through an in-kind grant to the Nahri Sarraj District Community Council (DCC), Creative-CCI supported the rehabilitation of the retaining wall and water gate to support enhanced agricultural production and irrigation. The DCC and local government representatives formed a project shura to monitor canal construction activity and to keep members of the community informed on progress. Given that the farmlands surrounding the canal provide the primary source of agricultural commodities to the Nahri Sarraj district, the project found strong support from GIRoA officials. The canal repairs allowed community members and government officials to cooperate, helping to strengthen linkages between these stakeholders and build confidence in government capacity. (HILMAND: NRS0032)



Before: The lack of a proper retaining wall led to flooding of surrounding farmlands.



After: Construction of the retaining wall and water gates will help boost agricultural production and reduce resource conflict.

## GIRoA working to build community trust

In Sarkani District, Kunar, GIRoA representatives spent considerable time consulting with elders and community members, including parents of school children, about needs in the district. The Donahi community felt neglected by their government representatives and raised their concerns about security of the local school and the market. Following the consultations, the community undertook a project to install 40 solar panels in the Sarkani District Bazaar, enabling shopkeepers to light the market and work later into the evening. The project also constructed a 253-meter surrounding wall and two new entry gates to enhance the Donahi School security and restrict unauthorized access to the school grounds.

The completion of the wall and installation of the solar panels bolstered community trust in the capacity of the government to respond to community needs and have improved the relationship between the community and GIRoA. On October 14 more than 150 people including community members and GIRoA officials attended a Closing Ceremony for two activities. The community demonstrated its approval and pride with locals taking photos during the evening in the Bazaar area under the solar light, sharing with friends and family over social media. A community elder, impressed with the surrounding wall for the school – attended by over 500 boys and girls said, “This was a very important project for us, and now parents feel much safer about their children attending the school each day.” (SARKANI: SAR0030 & SAR0039)



Parents expressed approval of the school improvements at the Closing Ceremony.

## Provincial Governor appeals for return of antiquities

A 3-day exhibition open to the community was part of the celebrations to mark completion of the Khost Museum Renovation project. The Closing Ceremony on October 12 was attended by over 300 invitees and included a public appeal for the donation of many antique items currently held privately. The PG said, “Many of us may have ancient items at home, so let’s donate these to the museum as part of our national duty.” Over 1,000 visitors



Provincial Governor Abdul Jabar Naeemi appealing for museum donations.

toured the museum during the exhibition, underscoring a primary goal that the rehabilitation of this attraction will enhance the social fabric of the city and continue to bring the community together. Many openly commended the renovation work, which includes a new boundary wall to protect the museum building. One was Speen Rawan Norzai, who while touring with family members said, “Visiting museums and seeing historical objects improves our knowledge of the past and helps our youngsters have a better understanding of our country’s rich cultural history.” Youth attaining a better historic and cultural understanding facilitates a more informed and balanced perspective, to assist in deciding what future they want. CCI enabled Khost Directorate of Information and Culture to rehabilitate the 480-meter boundary wall, 70-meters of sidewalk, 476 square meters of exhibition space and the 3-day open exhibition. The event attracted extensive coverage by local and national media outlets. (KHOST: KST0006)

## School boundary wall rehabilitation to increase school attendance

Communities in the unstable Gelan District in Ghazni noticed only education can bring peace, prosperity, and development to their area. Through the Gelan Cohesion Jirga, the Community Development Council (CDC), communities’ elders, and youth from Muryani village identified the rehabilitation of Muryani High School boundary wall as a top priority for the district. Despite constant security threats to those working with GIRoA, backing development projects, and teaching or studying, the community established a project shura to ensure students a safer and more comfortable learning environment to increase school attendance. The shura constructed a 320m wall - including two entry gates - around the school. Community members from Muryani village are excited with the school wall rehabilitation and anticipate a better and safer education for the 700 students at Muryani High School. Community elder and a member of the project shura, Abdul Baqi, who frequently visited the activity site to support the ongoing work said, “I feel accountable to help and support the ongoing work of this activity in all aspects, as my kids and kids of my community are going to study in there”. (GHAZNI: GLN0016)